



OUT OF *Africa*

South African Wines as Everyday Wines

BY MOLLY PEREIRA

Let's talk about everyday wines. Does that sound too ordinary? I think when we say "everyday wine", the first thought is inexpensive; meaning the least expensive wines we can drink everyday without having to empty out our wallet and without having to wince with each sip.

Does that sound awful? The answer is to not worry and be adventurous. Venture out to wine stores and explore! Go out to wine tasting and try wines without looking at the price tag. As you will discover, the wines you prefer, will most likely NOT be the most expensive.

There are endless choices of everyday wines that will WOW! you with great aromas and flavors but more importantly, a

nice price tag that is easy on your wallet. There are great wines from countries that you might not have thought of as wine regions.

For instance, South Africa; what do you think of when you hear South Africa? I certainly think of their wildlife, not wines. (At least not until I started in the wine business.) I had no idea South Africa is one of the world's leading wine producers and the source of that continent's finest wines. I learned that, before the 90's, South African wines were virtually unknown in the U.S.

I will not go into the whole history but, the first South African wines were made more than three centuries ago by Dutch colonists who vinified the wild grapes they found growing in the Cape. If I were to generalize, most of their wines could be classified as having medium alcohol and medium acidi-

ty similar to the European style.

The leading South African wines are Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc (aka, *Steen*), Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinotage, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. These will give you plenty of choices to enhance your everyday meal. For example, Steen from Western Cape is a 100% Chenin Blanc; it is dry and crisp with tropical fruit and apricot spice flavors. You can enjoy it as an aperitif or with seafood, quiches, or grilled chicken.

You will be impressed with *Buitenverwachting Beyond Sauvignon Blanc* from the coastal region. It is crisp and clean with ripe gooseberry, green pepper, green melon and hints of guava. It has firm structure and good acidity with a zingy lingering finish. You can pair it with herbed goat cheese, crudités, many shellfish and fish dishes including calamari, grilled

shrimp, raw oysters, steamed lobster or skate. All you have to say is, bay-ten-fur-vachk-ting, which is Dutch for "beyond expectation" and they have proven so. This wine farm dates back to 1773.

As for red wine lovers, you may not have heard of Pinotage. Pinotage is a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsaut (Hermitage). This Pinotage was created in South Africa in 1925 by a professor Abraham Penold. His general theory was to create the best characteristics of the classic pinot taste of Burgundy with easy to grow, disease resistant quality of Cinsaut. Now that you are aware of Pinotage, one of my favorite is *Stormhoek Pinotage*. It displays intense fruit with hint of spice, velvety texture with ripe, jammy fruit flavors. You can certainly have it with spicy Mediterranean dishes, grilled beef or lamb, zesty seafood casseroles and hearty vegetarian entrees.

Who can do without a Cab? Try *2005 Excelsior Cabernet Sauvignon*. This cab shows blackish plum in color and redolent of ripe blackcurrant, dark chocolate and plummy fruit on the nose. It is followed by sweet juicy fruit flavors of berries and tar and has good structure with soft, clean finish. It is ideal with steak, hearty stews or just simply enjoy on its own.

Now that we covered everyday wines to have with seafood, vegetables, chicken and red meat, we need something for our favorite pastas and pizzas. Why not a blend? *2003 Mill Race*, from *Vergelegen* (Fair'-huleg-hen) meaning "Situated Far Away" is situated at the tip of the African continent at the Cape of Good Hope in Stellenbosch district. This is a 60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon with attractive dark ruby color with ripe berry, plum, chocolate and coffee on the nose. It contains hints of mint, spice, and pencil shavings on the palate.

The wines I mentioned above are a good start with plenty of accolades supporting them. It is up to you to venture out and try new wines and turn your everyday wine into your WOW! wines.

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